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The Death that Brings Life: Reclaiming Indigenous Identity Among the Coeur d'Alene Indians

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Introduction

According to the Coeur d'Alene (Skitwish) Indian myth of their origins, the people found themselves created in the four million acre homeland centered on the banks of the beautiful lake in north Idaho from which they share a name. Traditionally a group of hunting and gathering bands until late in the 19th century, the Coeur d'Alene's had established permanent winter villages on the North and South Forks of the Coeur d'Alene River. They depended on the vast northwestern waterways for travel, and for the trout, salmon and other fish that teemed in these waters. An early Jesuit to the area, Nicholas Point, S. J., wrote in his journal that, "where the lake empties into the Spokane River, the waters are teeming with fish which are caught…." (Point 62). According to contemporary elder, Vinnie Felsman, the ancestral people hunted deer, bear, elk, small game,

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and collected water potatoes and varieties of berries and other plants throughout the year (personal communication). It was, according to Point, a marvel at the ease in which so much food could be gathered.

All of this came to a crashing halt at the end of the 19th century. Gold was discovered in the valleys of Northern Idaho, and the largest gold rush in the U.S. ensued in 1860. In 1881 gold was discovered on the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River, and in 1885 Noah Kellogg discovered silver in the same area. In rapid succession the Morning Star Mine (the deepest American Mine), the Bunker Hill Mine (the largest underground mine) and the Sunshine Mine (America's richest silver mine) were opened in the sacred mountains of the Coeur d'Alene people. In 1985, the one billionth ounce of silver was extracted from the area, as well as tons of lead, zinc, copper, phosphate and gold over the years (http://idahomining.net/ima/mhistory.html).

The story of the transformation of the land and the water has to be understood in the light of conflicting worldviews. For the indigenous people of the Columbia Plateau, the plants, animals and the processes of the land are imbued with spirit. The role of the people is to care for them and in doing so, what Westerners refer to as nature cared for the people. It is a relationship in which an embedded spirituality connected the land and people. While certainly there was burning of forests to drive game and large fishing encampments to gather winter foods, the long-term sustainability of these practices is evident. The burnings actually opened up forests from being too dense, and liable to large scale forest fires. And the gathering of fish during their migrations and spawning seasons was carefully controlled by task-chiefs (Anastasio, 1972).

Today, the food that nourished the ancestors is not a commercial commodity nor is it simply utilitarian. The contemporary Coeur d'Alene Tribe is a successful economic entity, yet the ancestral foods are a sacramental union of the past to the present and an essential element to tribal identity today. Perhaps this is best illustrated by the importance of traditional foods during a funeral wake or remembrance ceremony. At these events designated hunters are sent out to collect elk, berries, deer, fish, etc. for the tribal feast in honor of a person who has died. These are shared fruits of the land, and reconnect the people to their ancestral lands during the community feasts.

But there was a severe crisis: as the mining and logging became more entrenched, the land became more polluted and game and fish were dying. According to tribal historian and culture keeper, Henry Sijohn, the people stopped drinking the waters from the lake and eating the fish and plants because of strange tastes that developed there. People saw wildlife dying, and at times the rivers ran white with mine waste. According to the United States Geological Survey, in one day, in 1996, one million pounds of lead washed into the Coeur d'Alene

drainage system during a flood. They also estimate that at least 75 million tons of heavy metal tailings lie on the lake bottom. Overall, there are over 500 abandoned mines in the Silver Valley, which continue to pollute the system. What are affected are over 12,000 miles of rivers, 180,000 acres of lakes, and a half million acres of land (Satchell 61).

The tribe also realized that their future rested on the preservation and the reclamation of their heritage in the mountains and waters of their homeland. In 1986 the tribe demanded that the federal government and the state of Idaho clean up their ancestral lands, as the impact of the pollution was tearing apart the fabric of tribal identity. How could the rituals of death take place without traditional foods from the homeland? Today, thirty years later, the pristine environment of the pre-contact mountains is being restored (Satchell).

I am not a scientist, and I do not understand the chemical interactions or the long-term impact of various mining practices on the land. I am a cultural anthropologist, and I have been privileged to live and work with the Coeur d'Alene people and to be a part of their family life. In my work, what I have observed is the deep heartfelt connection to the beauty and the process of the land that the people were forced to leave over a hundred years ago. This is reflected in the aboriginal language. The geographical locales are not named for famous people or for the other things Westerners name places: rather, in the Coeur d'Alene language, geographical places are named for processes (Where the Muskrats Are) or for references to the body (Grandfather's Hair) (Palmer 1990). The Indian people do not claim land for themselves, in other words; but accept it as a part of a deep relationship. And, when a part of the social body is harmed, everyone is harmed. One can only imagine the horrors they experienced seeing mine tailings flowing into the streams and rivers, the ripping open of the earth, the deforestation and smelters spewing acrid smoke into the clear skies.

The Coeur d'Alene people had for centuries developed a relationship with their Plateau environment and had constructed their language to reflect this. Gary Palmer, a linguist who has worked for years on the semantic structure of the Coeur d'Alene language, suggests that "the complex lexical structure (of the Coeur d'Alene language) highlights the cultural profile of the landscape and reveals a cultural model of geography" (Palmer 1990, 263). This is a refinement of Boas' notion of the psychology of language. The main tenant of this perspective is that the uniqueness of a language rests in the unique cultural, social and geographical elements of the people using that language, i.e.: "Culturally shared knowledge is organized into prototypical event sequences enacted in simplified worlds. That much of such cultural knowledge is presumed by language use is as significant a realization to anthropology as to linguistics" (Palmer 1990, 264).

Palmer applies "scheme theory" to this understanding of linguistics. Scheme theory is based on a connection between a "trajectory" and a landmark (Palmer 1990, 265) and results in a "cultural model of geography," i.e,

> *In Coeur d'Alene place names, schematic relations defined by prefixes unify with other relations profiled by processes stems, lexical suffixes and additional prefixes. Their trajectors and landmarks are elaborated by the persons, animals, plants and land forms, bodies of water, and even processes, that embody, inhabit, and animate the Coeur D'Alene cognitive landscape* (Palmer 1990, 267).

This insight into the linguistic mindset of the Coeur d'Alene speakers has a tremendous impact on the significance of Indian perception of the land and themselves. As Palmer notes, this "poetry of geography" is a culturally relative manifestation of space and time and is indicative of a particular psychology of language. In another article, dealing with anatomical nomenclature (1985), Palmer underscores the complexity and uniqueness of the Coeur d'Alene semantic structure. My argument here maintains that the eradication of the physical and schematic world of the Coeur d'Alene people also destroys the basis of their unique language and self-identity and sets the stage for the unique religious and spiritual adaptations that occur among the Coeur d'Alene people. It is through the re-interpretation and adaptation of religious practices that a bridge is made that allows for the community to maintain relationships with the processes of the land and with self-identity as a continuous culture.[1]

Coeur d'Alene Spirituality and Religion

In order to understand the manner in which death in so many realms (the landscape, the language, elements of pre-contact culture, and individual deaths of tribal members) transforms the brokenness of contemporary tribal identities into a more holistic scheme, some historical observations are needed. The manner in which essential elements of being Coeur d'Alene flow from a religious consciousness is based upon a basic belief-system that I term "Indian-Catholic."[2] Some may use the term "two worlds," as though the Coeur d'Alene Indians inhabit two separate realities, such as a prior world and a modern world, or a "traditional" and a "Western" world. However, the theme that I will develop here is that the relative heterogeneity[3] of the contemporary Coeur d'Alene

1. Today, there are only two native speakers of the Coeur d'Alene dialect. The tribe has instituted a language renewal program.

2. I do not claim that all Coeur d'Alene people are "Catholic." Rather, the type of historical consciousness adapted by their ancestors in the 19th century continues to have an impact today.

3. Contemporary Coeur d'Alene's include descendants from Spokane, Colville, and other tribes, as well as a mixture of Euro-American and Hispanic, populations. They are doctors, lawyers, teachers, homemakers, working people, etc.

Indian population is bound together with a remarkable homogeneity of tribal history, culture and spirituality that is defined by "Catholic-Indian" spirituality. Indeed, the fact that so many diverse tribal people have come together as one people on the Coeur d'Alene reservation points toward a pervasive archetype of being-ness as Coeur d'Alene Indian.[4] It is my argument that this unique cultural manifestation is best understood through the processes of (1) respect, altruism and community feeling, (2) attachment to land, landscape, home and animals, and (3) creative knowing and participation in the awe, wonder, etc. of religious experience. These three elements are a sort of wisdom that I will term "heart knowledge." The specific example that I will use to illustrate this phenomenon will be the complex of funeral rites as practiced on the reservation today.

Community home and Spirituality

The first observation is to insist on the remarkable importance of kinship among the Coeur d'Alene people. The depth of layers of relationships and "knowing whom one is" in this kinship system is paramount to the structure of the tribe. Teit (1985), Ray (1942), Anastasio (1975), Walker (1973) and others have consistently noted that the Coeur d'Alene are a "family-band" based tribe. An examination of the historical and contemporary genetic kinship charts will reveal that the Coeur d'Alene are a cognatic, ambilocal group, with, however, a tendency to patrilocality. An important anthropological insight regarding kinship is that these structures reflect alliances and patterns of exchange that constitute *community* (Stone, 1997). Thus, the first essential element consists of family + band + tribe = community.

The second essential element to this theory consists of what Robert Redfield insists is one of the chief characteristics of Native American worldview, *viz.*, "relationships between humans and the environment is based on orientation (rather than confrontation)" (Kellert and Wilson 1993, 223). This is the concept of "landscape," the totality of land, land processes, animals and plants that are in relationship to the people. Succinctly put, the united "all" of the landscape and its constitutive elements are food, drink and security to the people, thus: landscape + animals + plants [food] = home.[5]

And, finally, the third essential element that I posit as a necessary condition for wholeness is what Redfield and others (Kellert, 1993) would describe as human, nature and the sacred conjoined, or, put another way, the union of human

4. The Coeur d'Alene were originally four or five family based bands on the Coeur d'Alene River, St. Joe River and the Hayden Area. They shared a common dialect of Interior Salish, and intermarried. Tribal identity is a product, however, of the Treaty Era, and the 1855 Treaty established them as a tribe.

5. I am making a distinction here between the idealized consciousness of the rituals of the tribe, and the everyday perception of the modern world tribal members.

and non-human in one moral order. This is expressed as ritualized, community celebrations that draw family, landscape and spirituality together. This third element can be expressed, then, as awe/wonder + ritual\religion = spirituality.

Uncovering the many cultural layers that too often hide this archetype is the real effort of this present research. Victor Turner, who has had such an important impact on the study of the multi-vocality of symbols, noted that contemporary tribal people are often "the result of over two hundred years of disintegration (migrations, intermarriage, etc.), yet they still consider themselves one people..."(1976, 1-3). At the center of this mysterious essence that unites a diverse people is an element that is much more than economic, political or formally religious. It is the connection of a unified spirit with an attachment to the land, the processes of the land, and a culturally developed sense of awe and wonder about that environment. This is what Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers referred to as "heart knowledge" (see for instance Cornford 126).

For the Coeur d'Alene Indians, that heart knowledge lies in the rivers and lakes of the mountains of their ancestors. It is a connection, however, which has been moved, shattered and broken through forced settlement patterns and the encroachment of modern standards on a hunter-gatherer society. Yet, what continues to exist today, as will be seen, is what Nicholas Point wrote about over one hundred years ago; a widely scattered people who joined together as one people at certain important gatherings (Point 51-56).

Historical Antecedents

In 1858 Fr. Joset wrote that the Coeur d'Alene country is

> *one of the most beautiful territories in Washington.* […] *the industrious Indians find in their lands an abundance of food in the great variety of herbs, roots and fruits which they can gather. At the same time, the lakes, rivers and streams abound with different kinds of fish, especially salmon trout at all seasons of the year, principally after the snow has melted. The fish and wildlife are abundant (yet) they [the Coeur d'Alene] are constantly being threatened with the loss of their beautiful and fertile lands (by the whites).*"
>
> (Joset deposition, G. U. archives).

Another Jesuit, Father A. Diomedi, wrote of the difficulty of convincing the Indians to move from Cataldo to the camas prairies of present day DeSmet (in his monograph of 1894, *Sketches of Modern Indian Life*). He notes the scattered villages and the riverine camps (56) and the reliance on game and fish (57). "This discussion [referring to discussions with the leaders of the Coeur d'Alene] went on from November to the following February, and little by little they were coming to reason" (62).

This was the last effort to maintain a semblance of the "reduction"[6] that the Jesuits, and Indians, had hoped to establish and to keep free of settlers. However, it would be a serious error to assume that (a) the Coeur d'Alene Indians passively assimilated the Western religion of the Jesuits and (b) that the Catholicism of the Jesuits was an attempt to subvert Indian worldview. For, as Nicholas Point wrote, headmen such as Stellam, "converted, but kept the mountain ways alive" (61-62).

What occurred on the Plateau, though, was a European population increase of over 30,000 individuals between 1850-1855 (Reichwein 169) forcing the Indian people into a small enclave of partial resistance. And, in 1890, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs mandated that "Indians must adopt Euro-American names" and abolished the pre-contact office of chief. In 1891 the Lake Mohonk conference outlined the federal goals as education, transformation, replacement of Indian customs with American ideas and laws, and the weakening of religious practices and rituals. Finally, in 1892, the Indian affairs' "crime list" included dancing, polygamy, intoxication, refusal to work, shamanism and established the prohibition of any European-American in aiding the Indians to maintain traditional life ways (Reichwein 190).

There was, in essence, a forced exodus from the center of the Indian's consciousness of place and being (Hart 1995; and Fahey, 1976). But even in their exodus the Coeur d'Alene people look back to the ancestral lands and animals as their homeland. Connected to this cultural memory[7] is the idea of community and spirituality.

The Catholicism of the Coeur d'Alene Indians is a syncretic blend of Indigenous beliefs, 19th century theology and contemporary cultural interpretations of spiritual desires and needs. What the Jesuits did, in essence, was provide a basis for the re-interpretation of Indian mythos with Christian lore. In order to be Coeur d'Alene, one had certain Catholic interpretation of the world. Thus, rather than eradicating the connections with the land and processes that so many other mission groups insisted upon, the Jesuit-Indian partnership resulted in a bridging of the Catholic sacraments with Indian spirit powers. An essential element of this adaptation was a continual reliance on traditional foods for ceremonials, among other purposes.[8]

6. Reductions were the attempts by South American Jesuits in the 16th-18th centuries to establish cities of refuge for the Indians from the slave trading and oppression of the colonizers. They were destroyed when the Jesuits were suppressed by the Pope (1750-1733). Cf. McNaspy.

7. Cultural memory, as Rodriguez and I have noted in another source, are those memories that are so rooted in a significant event in the past that they form a unique consciousness. These are such events as the Holocaust for the Jewish people.

8. I do not want to idealize this encounter too much. However, it is very important to note how the intertwining of the two worldviews has enabled the Coeur d'Alene to maintain an ethnic identity in the 21st Century.

One of the problems with the Western philosophical tradition of modernism is that social-cultural structures are viewed in dichotomous terms. That is, one is *either* a Christian or not, one is *either* an Indian, or not, etc. The syncretic abilities that the Coeur d'Alene Indians brought to the missionizing process was a holistic conception of being. It was, and is, completely compatible to the Coeur d'Alene to be a warrior, and a Soldier of the Sacred Heart (a person of peace); the Creator-Being is not only a mid-Eastern deity, but is also the Grandfather Spirit. The place of worship is not only the church on the hill, but is also the open lakes and woodlands and mountains.

It was these sorts of dichotomies that the Jesuit priests somehow affirmed in their unity, rather than in their differences. Of course it would be completely erroneous to suggest that this was all a great harmonious intervention: all cultural encounters have aspects of brutality and the process of assimilation and acculturation are subject in these cases to Western hegemony and power. But it was, also, the sort of cultural negotiation that the Coeur d'Alene Indians brought to the transition from nomadic hunter gatherers to settled reservation farmers and wage laborers.

It is in this manner, then, that the separation of the people from their spiritual center, Coeur d'Alene Lake and its rivers, is not an essential separation. The sort of separation of the environment and culture that is a part of this dialogue is the result of years of scientific reductionism. For example, the separation of the lake system into systems of vegetation, hydrology, fish, fowl, mammals, etc. and their constitutive economic hierarchies is not an indigenous epistemology. Wholeness, known in great detail, defies generalizations and is uniquely personal, i.e. the emphasis on personified spirits and powers. The Western Catholic concepts of saints, angels and a very immanent deity melded easily into Coeur d'Alene mythology and produced not a separation from the biota but, rather, a deeper reverence for its mystical qualities. The "*schumesh*"[9] of the traditional worldview, characterized by individual relationships to spirit powers, united with the personal pantheon of Catholicism and created a way to survive in a rapidly changing environment, i.e. Indian Catholicism.

Therefore the integration of Indian consciousness today with the processes of the aboriginal land cannot be easily analyzed using Western scientific measurements. Rather, the continued emphasis on personal knowledge of the land and waters is gained through personal experience. The focus on the old stories, the lore of the elders, alerts us today that what is being sought is not theoretical knowledge but a sort of wisdom. By paying attention to the importance of the stories of what people did, where they lived, and what areas of the land they hunted and gathered on, it is clear that knowledge of being Indian and Coeur d'Alene is a process of being in

9. This is the indigenous term on the Plateau for personal spiritual powers, often gained through traditional vision quests.

relationship to a particular geographical locale and its distinctive trans-historical manifestations with individuals.[10] The center of Coeur d'Alene life may have been physically shifted to the prairie region, but the importance of being people of the lake and rivers and mountains has survived. This continued "ethnicity" and tribal identity is much more than a marginal feature. It points directly to a response to a collective good (i.e. the historical move from the Lake region) and to a collective continuity with that "former" environment. These effects are what I have termed "trans-historical," i.e. the ancestors, the living and those yet to be born are active moral agents in the relationship to that land which is the core of Coeur d'Alene identity. For the purpose of this analysis, it is the economic center from which the essential meaning of ethnicity, and at the heart, spirituality, emanates.

Rather than eradicating the ways of the ancestors and replacing *shumesch* (powers) with one-God theology, the Jesuit spirituality enabled Indian adaptations. The importance of this consistent and continual link to traditional spiritualities underlines the contemporary reliance on wild game and fish and plants for ceremonial purposes. It is this subsistence that underlies community, identity with the land and the awe and wonder of religious experience that is the very core of Coeur d'Alene identity.

Marginality and Resistance

"Confidence" in the infra-structure of knowledge, confidence in the "reality" of visions and the power of faith in the people who mediate between heaven and earth, are essential ingredients for social cohesion of the heartfelt ALL (i.e. community). The Jesuits had to convince the Coeur d'Alene that they had powers that would enable the Indians to prosper and to be safe, to "trust" in the transformation of land and culture into an "unseen" utopia. In order to accomplish this, the Jesuits re-interpreted the symbols and the structures of the aboriginal faith and built a foundation of Catholic images. It was only when this was "in place" that accommodation and syncretism could be acceptable. The Indians, on the other hand, maintained their heart knowledge of community, place and spirituality. This can most readily be observed in the manner in which a death is ritualized by the Coeur d'Alene people today. It is these two worldviews that make the reconnection to an aboriginal environment so essential to Coeur d'Alene ethnic identity.

10. I will present a story that illustrates this in the final section of this paper.

One of the most important ceremonies that take place on the Coeur d'Alene reservation is the complex of rites surrounding the death, wake, funeral and memorial for an individual. These rituals provide an insight into the melding of Indian and Catholic spiritualities and religious practices as well as the significance of food and sharing as a connection with the past, present and future. As I will indicate in this section, the funeral rites represent a "moment" when the elements of heart knowledge are brought together: i.e., community feeling, attachment to "place," and participation in religious experience.

Life, Death and the Land of the Ancestors

It looks like it will be an early winter. The hot summer has ended suddenly, and already the nights are so much longer. As Fr. Connolly, who has worked on the Coeur d'Alene for over forty years, speaks the language and has been made a member of the tribe, drives the seventy miles to Spokane, winds scatter leaves across the roads, mice scamper in the headlights, and owls are seen hunting in the moonlight. He is on his way to see an old Coeur d'Alene woman, Lucy George, who is near death.

The north side of Spokane is an area of working class homes. He stops at a small frame house, its gate broken and lying on the ground. In the Indian manner, Connolly knocks on the door and walks into the house without waiting for it to be opened.

The small two-bedroom house is stark. In the living room old Don George sits, watching television with a couple of his grandchildren. Don is sitting in the recliner; the boys are draped on a sofa. Over Don's head is a large framed picture of Jesus and the Sacred Heart and over the sofa is a picture of John Kennedy. A few prayers are said over the dying woman.

Lucy died a few days later. Family was coming from various reservations, and arrangements were made for the wake and funeral at DeSmet. Rose, a tribal elder, told me that in the "old days" the wake would have been three days long. Today it is one day, but it is a full day.

Lucy's body arrived at the social hall in DeSmet in the early afternoon. The social hall is what is left of the old boy's building, from the boarding school days, which was torn down in the 1950's. Now this building is used primarily for wakes.

Lucy's casket was placed in a section filled with old statues of Mary, Joseph and Jesus and angels. Large black funeral candles were placed alongside the casket, and a *prie-dieu* was set in front of the casket. As she was brought into the building, a few family members gathered around her, and Fr. Connolly led an Indian prayer and hymn.

A steady stream of Coeur d'Alene people brought food into the kitchen located at the back of the social hall. A few women cooked salmon and wild meats, and coffee machines and urns of juice were prepared. By four in the afternoon, a large crowd was assembled in the hall, visiting and praying silently over Lucy. At 5.30 Fr. Connolly greeted the family, and in its name greeted all the people. The first wake prayers were said, asking for God's mercy on Lucy and for comfort for all the people and her family. The Indian song "*Gee-su, Ma-ree*" was sung.

Once the singing ended, a large buffet dinner was served and people ate at the long tables in the back of the hall. People continue to bring food to the kitchen all night long. This is food from the lakes, the streams, the mountains: berries, roots, salmon and trout, and deer and elk. The food that fed the ancestors, that unites the people to their past and their future.

At 7.30 people returned to the folding chairs set up in rows and to the benches along the wall. As new people arrived, they would kneel for a few minutes in front of Lucy, and then go to her family, shaking hands with each one.

Fr. Connolly began the recitation of the rosary, which was interspersed with the singing of Indian hymns.

Now, people would remain all night, visiting, praying and giving testimonials to Lucy. As the night wears on there is a growing sense that, "this is the time to talk." Some people talk about the strength that Lucy gave to them. Others spoke of the old times with Don and Lucy. Some members of her family spoke about Lucy's struggles and how she was always cheerful and good. Smokers sat in the back, talking in low tones and drinking coffee. Children continued to run in and out of the hall, only slowly lying down around their parents, a few of whom eventually left for the night.

Sometime in the middle of the night, a middle-aged man got up. Self-assured but obviously a bit nervous, he gave an emotional tribute to the "old ways":

> *When I was a kid I used to come to these wakes, and I didn't understand them. I thought they were good times to smoke and sometimes drink, and to see my friends. I thought all this Catholic stuff was boring and stuffy, and I didn't understand the Indian ways.*
>
> *Now, I have been sober for four years (applause) and I see these wakes as the real source of our strength. Just last year one of my children died, and her mom, a white woman, had her buried in a white church. There was nothing there. I felt so empty. No community, no identity. Nothing. Just come to the funeral, and an hour later, the little box is buried. I see now that the Indian way is a proud way. It is a way of identity, family and community. I teach my children that now, and I know I need this so much, too. It is good to be here, it is good to be Indian.*

At ten in the morning Lucy is carried into the church. Sweet grass and drums

accompany her, and the people sing the long Indian song of the funeral entrance, the "*Ko-lin-tsu-ten*." After she was brought into the front of the church, Ernie Stensgar, the tribal chairman, stood and read the story of Lucy that Connolly had gathered from the people through the night's wake. It is also the story of a world that has changed so greatly, yet remains essentially the same.

> *We come today to honor one of our old time Coeur d'Alene who has always been at the heart of our tribal life, for 87 years. Today we bring her back to our hilltop church to call out to God to now fulfill those promises made to her so long ago. Lucy's father… was from a group that settled here when the Coeur d'Alene moved from Cataldo in 1878. Lucy's mother… was a Spokane Indian. The family all lived on the old man's early homestead in the east end of Moctelme Valley, on a hillside above Windfall Pass Road.*
>
> *Lucy and her sister, Mary, were prominent for many years as leaders of Indian prayers and hymns, in the days after the old prayer leaders had passed away. The wakes were in the homes in those days, and Lucy and Mary were always there to help in singing and bringing comfort to people in their sorrow.*
>
> *Lucy was a strong lady, who had endured many of her own sufferings in life, and who had strong Christian prayer and a strong "medicine" to comfort and to protect people in time of need…*
>
> *Those were days also of hard work to secure food for the people, and Lucy was well known as an excellent hunter, root digger and huckleberry picker. Lucy was a great shot with her hunting rifle and she often hunted with the best of the old Coeur d'Alene hunters. She'd participate in deer drives, and would often "take the stand," and have the younger hunters drive the deer her way, because she always hit her mark. They'd come with as many as six deer after a good hunt, and would split the meat up among all the families, since no one had refrigerators or freezers in those days. Lucy would often take a load of people up into the mountains for huckleberries and they'd be gone for days on end* […] *Other times she would take kids from the mission school up the mountain for huckleberries, or she'd take a pickup full of elders out for root digging.*
>
> *Lucy had a lot of family, a lot of visitors, a lot of prayers, and her last sacraments, as her strength ebbed away. Finally, last Thursday, her sister, Mary, visited with her in the afternoon and wrapped her rosary around Lucy's hands. Lucy kissed her sister's rosary as a sign of the love and the prayer they shared, even though she could not speak. Then about an hour after Mary left for home, Lucy slipped peacefully away, to go home to her God...*

Conclusion

This tribute and story of Lucy exposes a number of important elements of the Coeur d'Alene Indian world. Again, this is material gathered from a wide range

of people who attended her wake. The reason that I present it in this form is to be able to "hear" the areas people emphasize as they remember the past, and to draw out of the narrative some feeling for life of the Coeur d'Alene. Some of these elements, which I would highlight, are the Catholic-Indian centeredness of the stories, the constant fight for survival, and the reliance on wild game, fish and plants even while farming and working wage jobs. And, as noted in the narrative on the wake itself, the essential need for the gathering, preparation and sharing of the traditional foods from the mountains and lakes of the ancestral homeland brings together community, home and the spirituality in a holistic manner.

It seems, too, that it is at the time of death that people are brought together in a unique way that bridges the generations and spans the abyss caused by the displacement from the mountains and streams. People take the time to remember the past, to talk about where the old people lived, what they did, and to feel the connection of being Indian. The essence of those connections is with the foods of the mountains: the deer, the huckleberries, the fish, and the roots. This connection is deep in the hearts of the people and becomes a consciously shared experience in the re-membering of place, community and religion that occurs during a wake/funeral ceremony. At the very core of this communal experience are the aspects of (1) sharing common resources between families, (2) celebrating with wild game and berries gathered for ritual meals, and (3) strengthening communal identities and tribal knowledge through prayer and speeches recalling the past and the place of the present in Coeur d'Alene culture history. It is through these sorts of ritual gatherings and sharing of resources that the core spirituality of the Coeur d'Alene people reaffirms "heart knowledge" and bridges the potentially shattering experiences of the loss of Indigenous spirituality, land and community. And, it is out of these key moments that the continued reliance on the game, fish and plants of the ancestors is raised to a much higher level of what it means to subsist on the gifts of the land. This is what is being found again as the land and waters are cleaned, and the people return to the lake and the rivers to once again be with their ancestors.

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Summary: This article presents the enigma of how a small tribe might be able to retain cultural identity in the midst of rapid and extremely destructive loss of environment and traditional subsistence ways. The case of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe of Northern Idaho is presented as a contemporary example of the understanding of why traditional foods are important to cultural identity. Issues of worldview, religious consciousness and tribal sovereignty are addressed, as well as personal insights from contemporary tribal members. Integral to this analysis is the understanding of how language forms a schematic reality that connects the present to the past. This analysis demonstrates how the adaptation of Western religious imagery is synchronized to an Indigenous worldview that bridges language loss with persistent patterns of cultural memory.
Key words: worldview, sovereignty, subsistence, environment, religion, language, Coeur d'Alene.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta el enigma de cómo una tribu pequeña pudo conservar su identidad cultural en medio de la pérdida rápida y extremadamente destructiva del medio ambiente y de prácticas tradicionales de subsistencia. El caso de la tribu de los Coeur d'Alene del norte de Idaho se presenta como un ejemplo contemporáneo para entender por qué los alimentos tradicionales son importantes, y cómo una tribu puede luchar en contra de intereses comerciales de tipo federal, estatal y privado para recuperar un medio ambiente prístino. Se tratan los temas de las diferentes visiones del mundo, de la conciencia religiosa y de la soberanía tribal, y se evocan puntos de vista personales de miembros actuales de la tribu. El análisis incluye historias de ancianos así como la descripción de un rito funerario.
Palabras claves: visión del mundo, soberanía, subsistencia, medio ambiente, Coeur d'Alene.